



2009 ANNUAL REPORT

OFFICE OF SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS

More at Four Pre-Kindergarten – More at Four is North Carolina’s state-funded, high-quality academic pre-kindergarten program that serves at-risk four-year-olds. More at Four experienced rapid expansion over the past eight years in an effort to meet the critical need of unserved, at-risk four-year-olds in our state. In that time, the program has moved from serving just over 1,200 children in 2001-02 to over 30,000 in each of the past three years.

Preschool Exceptional Children – Preschool Exceptional Children is state- and federally-funded special education and related services for preschoolers with disabilities. The Public Schools of North Carolina entitle all three-, four-, and pre-k five-year-old children with disabilities to a free and appropriate public education mandated through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, Section 619. Preschool Exceptional Children promotes inclusion for children with disabilities in pre-kindergarten settings. The combination of More at Four and Preschool Exceptional Children funding has resulted in a significant increase in inclusive classrooms for children with disabilities.

Title I Preschool – Under federal Title I funding from the No Child Left Behind Act, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) may choose to set aside a specific amount to provide preschool services for children with educational needs. Title I Preschools in North Carolina serve four-year-olds. With the work of the Office of School Readiness to expand pre-kindergarten, Title I funding that is reserved by LEAs for preschool services has increased and more LEAs are choosing to use Title I for preschool. Most Title I Preschool classrooms are combined with More at Four.

Even Start – Even Start Family Literacy is a federally-funded education program for low-income families that is designed to improve the academic achievement of young children and their parents, especially in the area of reading. The program combines four core components which make up family literacy: 1) early childhood education; 2) adult literacy (adult basic and secondary-level education and/or instruction for English language learners); 3) parenting education; and 4) interactive literacy activities between parents and their children. The Office of School Readiness awards annual grants to local agencies to implement Even Start. Most Even Start pre-kindergarten classrooms are combined with More at Four.

Head Start State Collaboration Office – Head Start is a federally-funded, comprehensive preschool program designed to meet the emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs of three- and four-year-olds and their families. The federal government awards grants directly to local agencies to implement Head Start.

In 2006, the Head Start State Collaboration Office was placed in the Office of School Readiness to expand coordination of our state pre-kindergarten programs with Head Start. As a result, most of North Carolina’s Head Start programs are combined with More at Four.

The Office of School Readiness administers and coordinates all of North Carolina’s state and federally-funded pre-kindergarten programs:

- More at Four Pre-Kindergarten
- Title I Preschool
- Head Start State Collaboration Office
- Preschool Exceptional Children
- Even Start Family Literacy

These pre-kindergarten programs serve three- and four-year-old children throughout the state who are at risk for poor school outcomes. North Carolina’s pre-kindergarten system is built on a diverse delivery system at the community level, including public schools, licensed child care centers and Head Start programs. Under the authority of the State Board of Education, all state- and federally-funded pre-kindergarten programs must meet high-quality educational standards to ensure positive learning outcomes for our children who are most at risk.

The Pre-K to Grade 3 academic continuum is critical for children to build the foundational skills for school success and high school graduation. Promoting the Pre-K-3 continuum, the Office of School Readiness supports school success for children through:

- Expanding access to pre-kindergarten statewide
- Setting academic standards for pre-kindergarten that are comparable to K-12 public school standards
- Aligning pre-kindergarten standards, curriculum, instructional practices and assessment across the Pre-K to Grade 3 continuum
- Providing technical assistance to pre-kindergarten classrooms and to local administrative agencies
- Supporting the provision of high-quality special education and related services for preschool children with disabilities
- Supporting pre-kindergarten teacher education, Birth through Kindergarten (B-K) licensure, and professional development
- Monitoring programs for quality

PRE-KINDERGARTEN STANDARDS

North Carolina’s statewide pre-kindergarten system is recognized nationally for high-quality standards by the National Institute for Early Education Research. Our state pre-kindergarten standards include:

- qualified teachers with specialization in pre-k education
- early learning standards
- comprehensive curricula
- screening/referral and support services
- small class size
- family-school partnerships
- inclusive settings for children with disabilities

The State Board of Education approved new comprehensive pre-kindergarten curriculum options, implemented in 2009, that align with North Carolina’s early learning standards for preschool children, *Foundations*. *Foundations* was endorsed by the State Board of Education in 2005, and this year the Office of School Readiness launched *Foundations Online*, a free, web-based introduction to the early learning standards that can be accessed at www.osr.nc.gov.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN FUNDING

The implementation and expansion of state funding for the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten program since 2001 has been the catalyst to expand access to pre-kindergarten for at-risk children in every county, leverage federal funding for pre-kindergarten and raise the quality of pre-kindergarten education statewide to public school standards.

All counties receive state and federal funding for pre-kindergarten and have the flexibility to coordinate this funding, with support from the Office of School Readiness. Local leveraging of these funding sources has allowed communities to serve more children, meet specific local needs, and enhance quality. Smart Start funds and child care subsidy funds may be used locally to support pre-kindergarten. When communities choose to use these funds, they typically fund the child and family supports that supplement pre-kindergarten in private child care centers, such as before and after school care, transportation, and developmental screening.

FUNDING FOR PRE-KINDERGARTEN IN NORTH CAROLINA (INCLUDES PROGRAMS FOR 3 AND 4 YEAR OLDS)

2008-09 Expenditures	State	Lottery	Federal (OSR)	Federal (LEA)	Federal (Local Grantees)	Total
More at Four Pre-K	\$77,976,662	\$84,519,205				\$162,495,867
Preschool Exceptional Children	\$38,695,971		\$1,184,988	\$9,849,554		\$49,730,513
Title I Preschool			\$135,969	\$43,063,716		\$43,199,685
Even Start			\$120,571		\$1,469,990	\$1,590,561
Head Start	\$65,669		\$185,510		\$122,995,654	\$123,246,833
Total	\$116,738,302	\$84,519,205	\$1,627,038	\$52,913,270	\$124,465,644	\$380,263,459

2009-10 Projected Budget	State	Lottery	Federal (OSR)	Federal (LEA)	Federal (Local Grantees)	Total
More at Four Pre-K	\$80,952,252	\$84,635,709				\$165,587,961
Preschool Exceptional Children	\$39,110,058		\$2,096,180	\$20,283,246		\$61,489,484
Title I Preschool			\$171,305	\$61,267,466		\$61,438,771
Even Start			\$84,474		\$1,444,717	\$1,529,191
Head Start	\$70,000		\$175,000		\$122,995,654	\$123,240,654
Total	\$120,132,310	\$84,635,709	\$2,526,959	\$81,550,712	\$124,440,371	\$413,286,061

CHILD OUTCOMES

More at Four Evaluation

The More at Four Pre-Kindergarten program has an annual independent evaluation of program implementation and child outcomes. Conducted by the FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill since the inception of the program, the evaluation finds that the More at Four program is reaching its target population of at-risk, unserved four-year-olds. For child outcomes, the evaluation finds that these children make substantial gains during pre-kindergarten in language and literacy, math, general knowledge and social skills and that the program has even greater benefits for children with greater needs. The evaluation has followed several cohorts of children into kindergarten and finds that these children continue this significant trajectory of growth. (Peisner-Feinberg and Schaaf)

Consistent with previous findings, new evaluation results for 2008-2009 indicate that children experienced significant growth across all domains of learning during their pre-kindergarten and kindergarten years. These skills represent key areas of school readiness and are important predictors of children's later success in school, including learning to read. (Peisner-Feinberg, 2009)

More at Four Evaluation results are available at www.fpg.unc.edu/~mafeval/.

Preschool Exceptional Children Outcomes

The Office of Special Education Programs, US Department of Education, requires state early intervention and preschool special education programs to report on child outcomes. North Carolina's Preschool Exceptional Children programs are currently reporting and analyzing data for three critical outcomes for children served. The child outcome targets for North Carolina are under development and reporting on these child outcome measures will begin in 2010-2011.

The three child outcome measures are:

1. Children have positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships)
2. Children acquire and use knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy for 3-5 year olds)
3. Children use appropriate actions to meet their needs

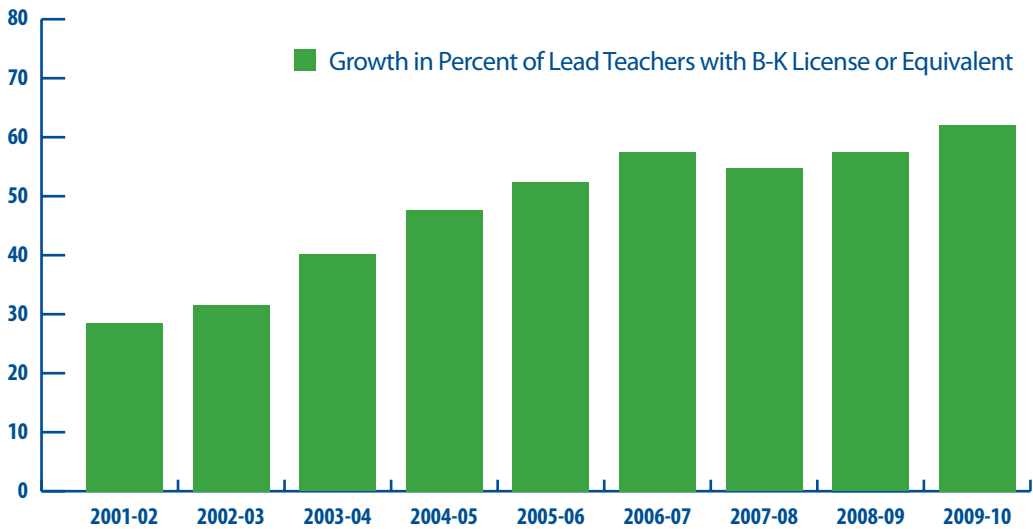
PRE-KINDERGARTEN TEACHER QUALITY

The State Board of Education requires Birth through Kindergarten (B-K) licensure or equivalent for pre-kindergarten teachers, ensuring a solid foundation in early childhood education. Through licensure, teachers implement a process of self-assessment and reflection to strengthen teaching practices and child learning outcomes, guided by a professional growth plan and monitored through formal evaluation. Pre-kindergarten teachers have ongoing professional development targeted to key academic areas, including early learning standards, curriculum implementation, formative assessment and developmentally appropriate practice.

The implementation of More at Four since 2001 has applied the same standards for pre-kindergarten teachers in the private child care sector as those for teachers in public schools. More at Four supports teachers who do not initially meet the standards in moving toward B-K licensure, through T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarships and the Teacher Licensure Unit. The More at Four teacher standards and assistance in meeting those standards has resulted in a significant increase in pre-kindergarten teachers with B-K licensure, as well as high educational attainment for More at Four teachers overall.

Currently, in More at Four classrooms that have been operating for five or more years, 93 percent of teachers have at least a bachelor’s degree (including 72 percent with B-K licensure or equivalent) and the remaining are currently working toward a B-K license. In More at Four classrooms that have been operating for four or fewer years, 78 percent of teachers have at least a bachelor’s degree (including 52 percent with B-K licensure or equivalent) and the remaining are working toward a bachelor’s degree or B-K license.

GROWTH IN PERCENT OF LEAD TEACHERS WITH B-K LICENSE OR EQUIVALENT



TEACHER LICENSURE UNIT

The Office of School Readiness operates a unique teacher licensure function that supports More at Four teachers in nonpublic schools (child care centers and Head Start) throughout the B-K licensure process. These services provide More at Four teachers who work in nonpublic schools access to the same support as their peers who work in public pre-kindergarten classrooms.

The Teacher Licensure Unit (TLU) supports licensed teachers with mentoring and evaluation services, with the goal of developing effective teachers resulting in better child learning outcomes.

- Through the services offered by the TLU, the Office of School Readiness is working to:
- Increase the number of B-K licensed teachers overall and expand the number of highly effective teachers serving the most at-risk children
 - Support private child care participation in More at Four and enhance standards for child care

The Office of School Readiness also provides preschool demonstration sites in locations across the state. Teachers’ plans for personal professional development incorporate guided observations of effective practices at these demonstration sites. Guided observations, reflection and follow-up have been shown to be more effective for improving the quality of teaching skills when compared to one-time workshops. In 2008-09, the Office of School Readiness, Preschool Exceptional Children, also launched a preschool assessment center initiative to develop best practice demonstration centers for multidisciplinary play-based assessments with preschool children.

Office of School Readiness education consultants provide significant technical assistance to pre-kindergarten classrooms and local administrative agencies to ensure programs are well implemented based on education standards. The intent of classroom technical assistance is to help early childhood professionals identify areas of strength in classroom practice and areas in which support is needed. Classrooms may be designated for technical assistance based on the results of formal assessments, observations made by state personnel during site visits, at the request of the contractor, or based on other sources of reporting. Classroom technical assistance may include the development of a plan for professional growth, and appropriate follow-up by local or state office personnel.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, visit the website for the Office of School Readiness at www.osr.nc.gov

Office of School Readiness • NC Department of Public Instruction

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